

# Communities in Transition



## Area Research Report 2023 Larne

Dr Brendan Sturgeon  
and Prof Dominic Bryan



Northern Ireland  
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Paramilitarism &  
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The Authors hope that the content of this Report offers a valuable insight into how people residing throughout Larne feel about a variety of issues associated with their local area.

## INTRODUCTION

The Research Team involved in the development of this Report were tasked with developing Area Reports for each of the sites where the Communities in Transition programme is currently active. Communities in Transition is one strand of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime. The Executive Office NI leads the policy development of Communities in Transition, in partnership with Co-operation Ireland and Queen's University Belfast.

The programme aims to support areas where there has been a history of paramilitary activity and coercive control. The primary objective is to support the transition of these sites to a point where paramilitary groups no longer exercise influence, and their activity is no longer as prevalent. To achieve this ambition, Communities in Transition funds a range of over 30 innovative and community focused projects. These projects are designed to increase the capacity of each area and are categorised under the following headings: Area Regeneration; Capacity Building; Community Safety and Policing; Environment and Culture; Health and Wellbeing; Personal Transition; Restorative Practice; and Young People. The Area Reports will identify the on-going challenges that exist throughout each Communities in Transition site. We will also point to the key work that is aimed at stimulating sustained change in the areas.

### LARNE

Communities in Transition activity in Larne focuses on the areas in and around Antiville and Kilwaughter wards. Previous research has indicated that Larne is an area that suffers from different types of inequality and deprivation (Sturgeon & Bryan, 2021). Over half of adult residents in the Antiville and Craigyhill wards have 'no' or 'low-level' qualifications. Furthermore, other studies have linked these poor education outcomes to second and third generation 'worklessness'. Family breakdown is common, and many families are struggling with low incomes and the area's high level of unemployment. It has also been stated that mobility is an issue in the area – many residents do not drive, and transport links are poor. This has led to previous research indicating that people often feel 'trapped' in the area (Co-operation Ireland, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY

The focus of this Report is on presenting a 'bottom up' assessment of the key issues relevant to the residents of Larne area. The focus is not on re-presenting the many very valuable pre-existing data sets that exist elsewhere. Such data sets provide important indications of the overall capacity of the area, but often fail to tease out the correlating lived experiences. In this Report, we wish to address this gap in our understanding of the Communities in Transition sites.

To appropriately engage with participants we designed a methodology that ensured their opinion was positioned at the centre of our work. We took a mixed methods approach that utilised PGIS Mapping Software, Qualitative Interviews and a Household Survey.

Participants were invited to identify and mark specific categories of place, such as where things are getting better, where things are getting worse, where they feel safe or unsafe using a 'spraycan' tool on a computerised map of the local area. The individual marked maps were then aggregated to generate a collective view of the site.

Recorded Qualitative Interviews were conducted in conjunction with the completion of the Spraycan exercise, allowing the Research Team to tease out the overall capacity of the area alongside correlating lived experiences, both positive and negative.

Participants in this qualitative element of our research were recruited with the assistance of Communities in Transition Delivery Partners. Interviews took place in local community settings in Spring 2022.

In this area, 20 people participated in our PGIS mapping exercise and accompanying qualitative interview – 18 of these individuals identified as Unionist and 2 as Other (neither Nationalist nor Unionist).

### Household Survey – Overview

- 78 people from Larne took part in the Household Survey survey, carried out by market research company, Perceptive Insight in Spring 2022.
- 68 Participants identified themselves as Protestant and 10 identified as Neither.
- 40 Participants were male and 38 participants were female.
- 68 participants were Unionist, 10 identified as 'other'.
- The participants were aged between 17 and 76.

# Research Findings

## COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

In this section, we assess the ways in which participants feel attached to their local area.

### Household Survey

Two key findings emerged from the Survey findings, which indicated that there was a strong sense of community attachment in this area.

- **71% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that there was a strong sense of community throughout Larne.**

The average response across all the CIT sites was 66%.

- **74% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt connected to their local area.**

The average response across all the CIT sites was 68%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **20 participants completed the Spraycan Mapping Tool.**
- **18 identified themselves as 'Unionist' and 2 as 'Other'.**
- **Figure 1 demonstrates the extent to which community space is segregated in Larne, on the basis of community identity.**

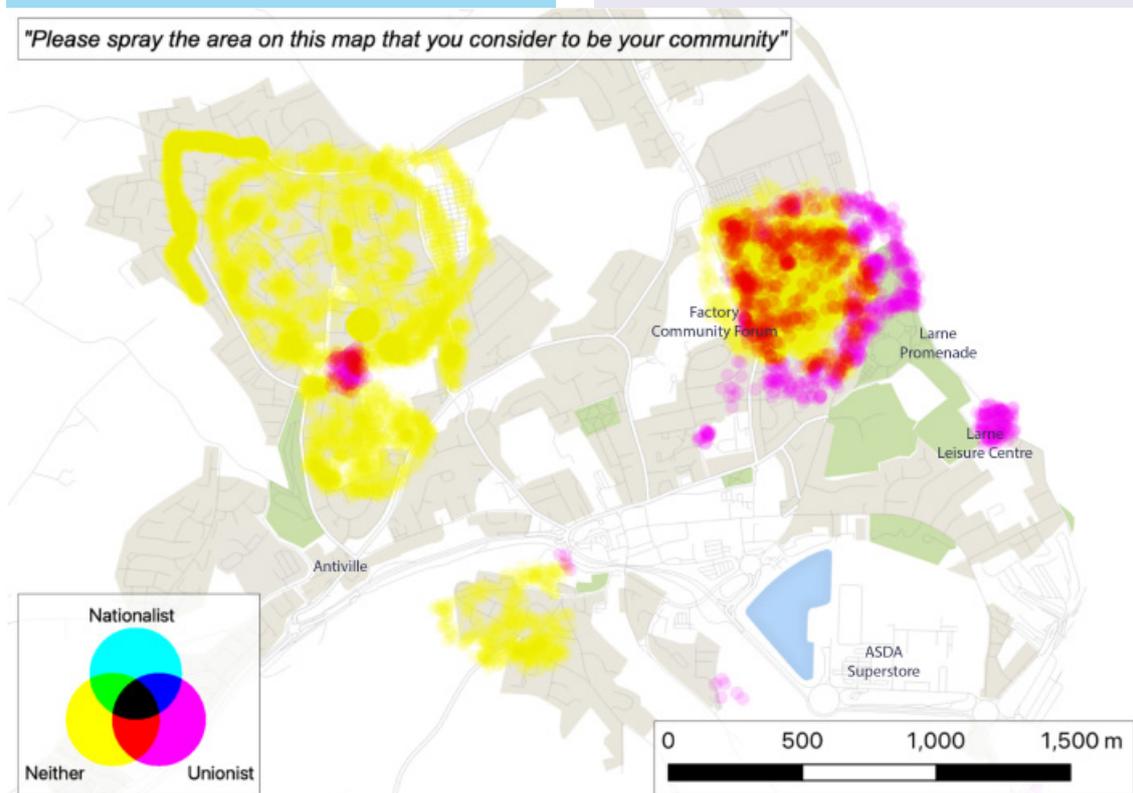


Figure 1: Community Attachment in Larne.

## Qualitative Interviews

A number of participants indicated that they felt there was a strong sense of community togetherness throughout Larne, despite the area specific challenges mentioned elsewhere in this Report.

Participants attributed this sense of 'community' to the presence of many long-term residents that live throughout the area.

*'I think we all just know one another... do you know what I mean? Most of us have our families close by. You might have one street where you'd have the parents of a family... And then in that same street... the children of that couple might be living with their family and raising their kids. So, you have a closeness... and most of us have been here for a long time... so, yeah... you just kind of know everyone.'*

*'In most cases... I think people have been here for a long time. You know? You don't really get lots of people moving in and out of the area. People tend to stay here. Even if they do go away for school or work... you generally find they come back... and their family has kept space for them.'*

*'I would know most people in my area... in my street and I think that just means when you need people, they tend to be there for you.'*

Some participants suggested that they feel more confident about discussing the level of community spirit that exists in the area since the Coronavirus pandemic. They indicated that there had been a significant community response

toward supporting the most vulnerable members of the area during this timeframe. For many participants, especially those who may have been having doubts about the level of cooperation in the site, this was reaffirming.

*'I think the response (to the lockdown restrictions associated with the pandemic) was incredible. People really came back together... to support one another and to think about how we could support the most vulnerable. It was a horrendous thing to go through, but it really did remind you that you're not alone... and we need to look after everyone by coming together.'*

Participants explained that cultural expression was an ongoing issue in the area and a topic that had proved contentious in the past – specifically when discussing the best way to plan and manage bonfires – see Page 9 for more details.

*'Bonfires are a big... I don't want to say problem... because they're very important, but finding the right way to manage them has taken the area a lot of time, but we're getting there. We have a protocol in place to determine what is appropriate and what isn't... and that has the support of everyone in the area... from those organised in genuine community groups to others who you would probably define more properly as paramilitaries.'*

## KEY FACILITIES

In this section we identify the key facilities that are important to participants. We probe how these spaces are utilised and ask whether there are places that people would like to use; but chose not to.

### Household Survey

- **27% of our participants indicated they were involved with a Local Church.**
- **18% were associated with a Sports Club.**
- **16% were involved in a Local School.**
- **8% participated in Neighbourhood Associations.**

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **When asked to identify key facilities in Larne, the majority of participants marked shops and/or supermarket, such as ASDA Superstore and B&M.**
- **A mix of participants marked Larne Promenade, Larne Town Park and Larne Leisure Centre. These locations were viewed as being important to those people living throughout Larne. It was also suggested that the locations are important for bringing visitors to the area.**

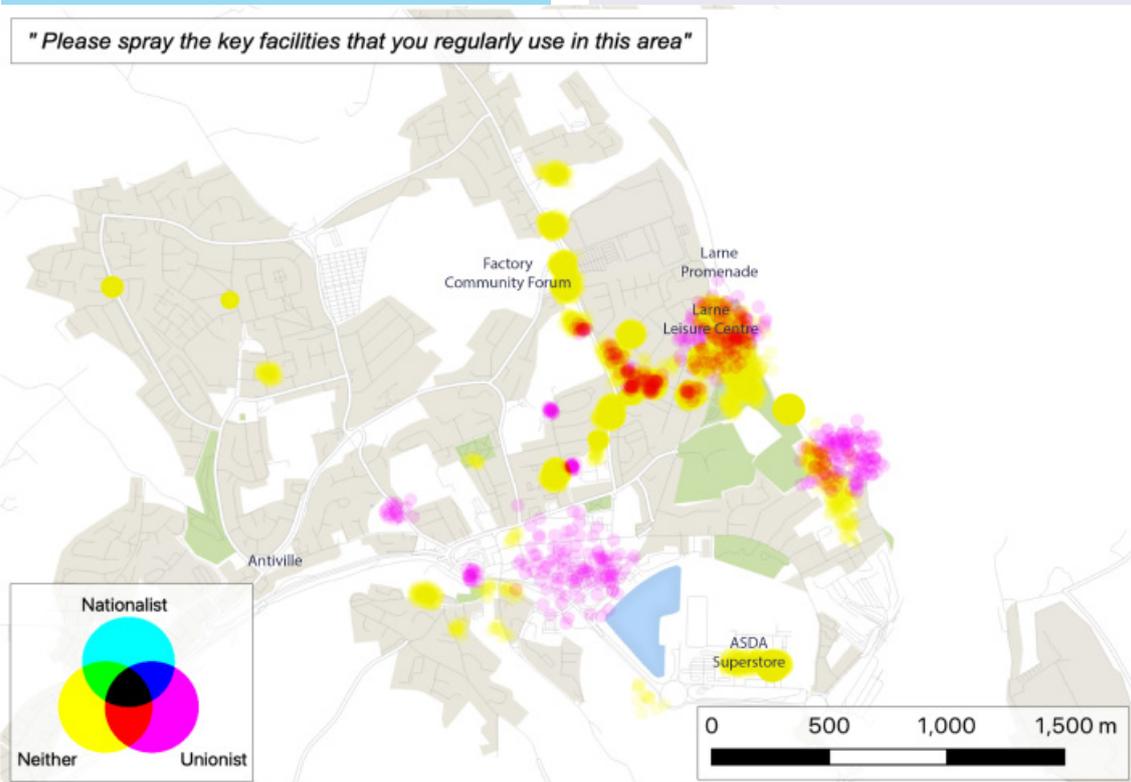


Figure 2: Key Facilities in Larne.

## Qualitative Interviews

Participants indicated that there was a basic lack of amenities throughout the area. Concerns ranged from the dearth of local shops to more specific concerns about the lack of provision for young people.

It was suggested that there had been a general lack of investment throughout the area, leaving the small number of facilities that participants did identify, in frequent states of disrepair.

*'There's really nothing. There isn't... there's a park, but it was closed for a bit, because there was a hole in the ground!'*

*'We have nothing... nothing at all for young people. That's an enormous problem. They're just hanging about. I think that means they also get dragged into doing stuff they shouldn't be, but in some cases they're doing nothing. The problem is that either way, I think people are intimidated... do you know what I mean? It's not nice if I'm walking my mother to the shop or taking my son out on the bikes, if there's 10 to 12 kids staring at us. It makes you uneasy, but there's risks for them as well... I think you worry if they're just sitting there, they might be approached by the wrong type of people.'*

Participants stated the Factory Community Forum was one of the few spaces that was providing leadership and services in the area. It was noted that it was the first place participants would go if they had a problem in the area. Participants also discussed the importance of Extern using the site and explained

that their presence was important in adding depth to local responses for local problems.

*'If it wasn't for local community groups, we'd have nothing. People working in the Factory Community Forum and for Extern, they're the only people driving any type of change. We're getting nothing at all from the statutory bodies, so we're really very reliant on them to provide things for the community. I think they're providing leadership and they're also providing a place to go when they do have a problem... and maybe don't have the confidence they would want to have in the police or local council.'*

While participants were generally dissatisfied with the quantity and quality of indoor facilities that were present throughout the area, a number stated that they spent a lot of time outdoors and referenced the different walkways that existed around the area's coastline.

*'We would be very much be going outdoors... there's the music yard. Ballygally Hall... different events in the halls. The town park... the promenade... these are the type of things we'd use as a family. I mainly take them (children) outdoors.'*

*'The Snake (local name a path connecting the Promenade to Bankheads) is a lovely spot. We're very lucky that way.'*

## COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING BETTER

In this section, we identify the current community capacity that exists in Larne, with a specific focus on identifying things that have improved within the area.

### Household Survey

- **82% of respondents indicated that they would know who to contact if they had a problem associated with their community.**

The average response across all the CIT sites was 84%.

- **67% agreed or strongly agreed that they had the skills to help change their area for the better.**

The average response across all the CIT sites was 50%.

- **37% of respondents felt the area would be in better condition in five years time.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 29%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- When participants were asked to mark locations in Larne where they felt that things had improved, many struggled to identify relevant spaces and some left the map completely blank (as they did not believe that there was a particular location where things had got better).
- Some participants marked the Factory Community Forum.
- A small number of participants felt that the presence of the Caterpillar plant was important.

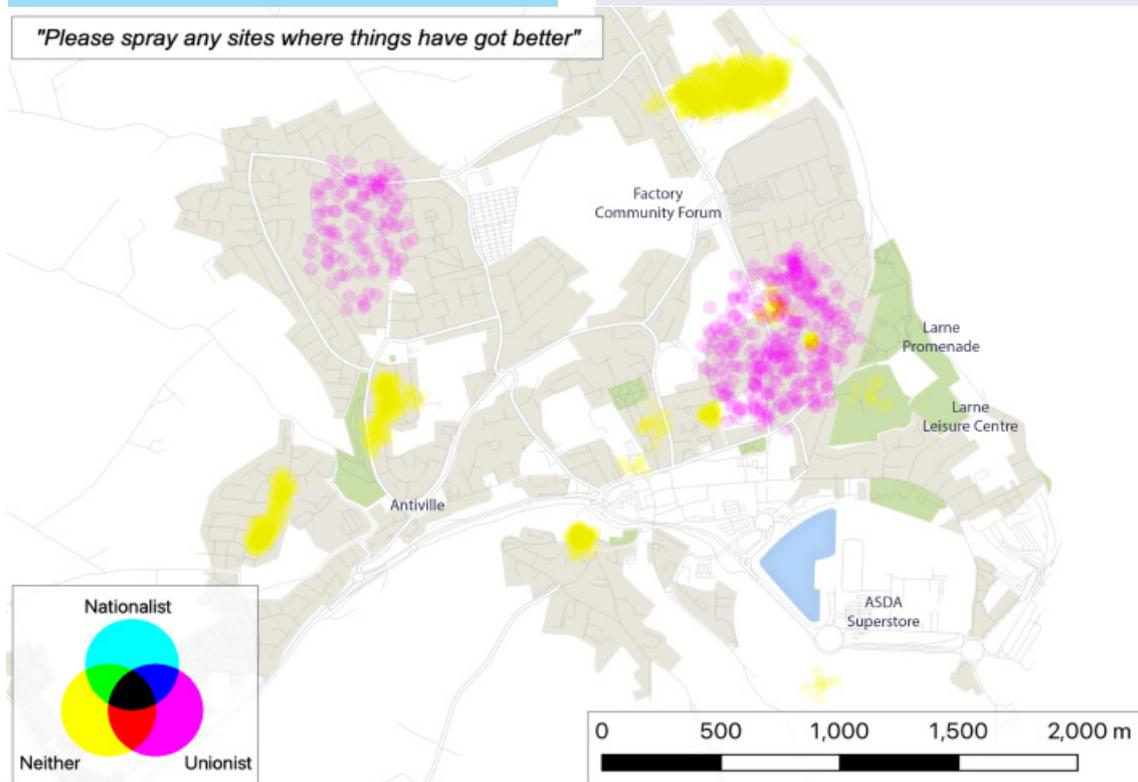


Figure 3: Locations in Larne where things have got better.

## Qualitative Interviews

Although participants identified a number of site-specific challenges, discussed elsewhere in this Report, they did also reference some points of improvement.

Some participants indicated that there had been a long-term tension about the identity of the community – this was often associated with the way in which local residents felt the terms ‘Loyalist’ and ‘Loyalism’ were portrayed in the media, and society more generally. Participants noted that this had a ‘long journey’, but there was a feeling that people were starting to feel pride in defining themselves as being a ‘Loyalist’ and were more confident in the general direction of Loyalism.

*‘That’s been a long journey... the term Loyalism has basically been dragged through the mud by the media. If you look at the Sunday papers... they’re always running a story on a Loyalist feud or a big reveal about a Loyalist leader or whatever. I think that’s helped destroy the way people view the term. I don’t think politicians want to be affiliated with it and I don’t think funding bodies want to be seen giving us money, but we’re trying to get back to remembering what being a Loyalist is actually about and taking pride in that. There’s nothing wrong with being a Loyalist... it doesn’t mean you’re a paramilitary... in-fact what we’re trying to do is re-own the term... take it back from those gangs.’*

Participants noted that improvements to the way in which the terms ‘Loyalist’ and ‘Loyalism’ were discussed, had also provided

ways to rethink bonfire management strategies. It was explained that local bonfire management protocols had been put in place to ensure that only appropriate material were used and to remove anything degrading about other community identity groups.

*‘You want to get away from all that (burning symbols associated with other community groups). You want to focus on yourselves... what’s important to this community? Celebrate what’s important to us... not destroy things that are important to other people. I think that’s why the bonfire protocols help provide people with guidance... and those measures were discussed and agreed by everyone throughout the area.’*

Some participants felt that cooperation between local community groups was improving, while the presence of CIT was also welcomed. The programme was seen to be offering key support to the community, particularly during the Coronavirus pandemic.

*‘I think collaboration between groups is much better. I think they see the value in working together. Whereas perhaps before... they would have been a bit more... you know, on their own’*

*‘Communities in Transition has been really important in bringing people together. During the pandemic... it really helped fill a number of gaps. Extern are doing lots of really great stuff in the area.’*

## COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING WORSE

In this section, we identify some key problems that have emerged in Larne, which undermines the community capacity of the site.

### Household Survey

- **Only 15% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had an influence over decisions that are made about their area.**

The average response across all the CIT sites was 27%.

- **71% of participants indicated that in five years time, the area would be either in the same condition or worse.**

The average response across all the CIT sites was 71%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **When participants were asked to identify locations in Larne where things had got worse, some indicated that they could spray the whole of Larne (due a perception that very little had improved in the area).**
- **Some participants marked Larne Town Park, due to a general belief that the space is not well looked after. Others felt that the poor lighting in the area has meant that people can feel uneasy being near the site in the dark, especially as it was suggested that it can feature incidents of anti-social behaviour and low-level crime.**

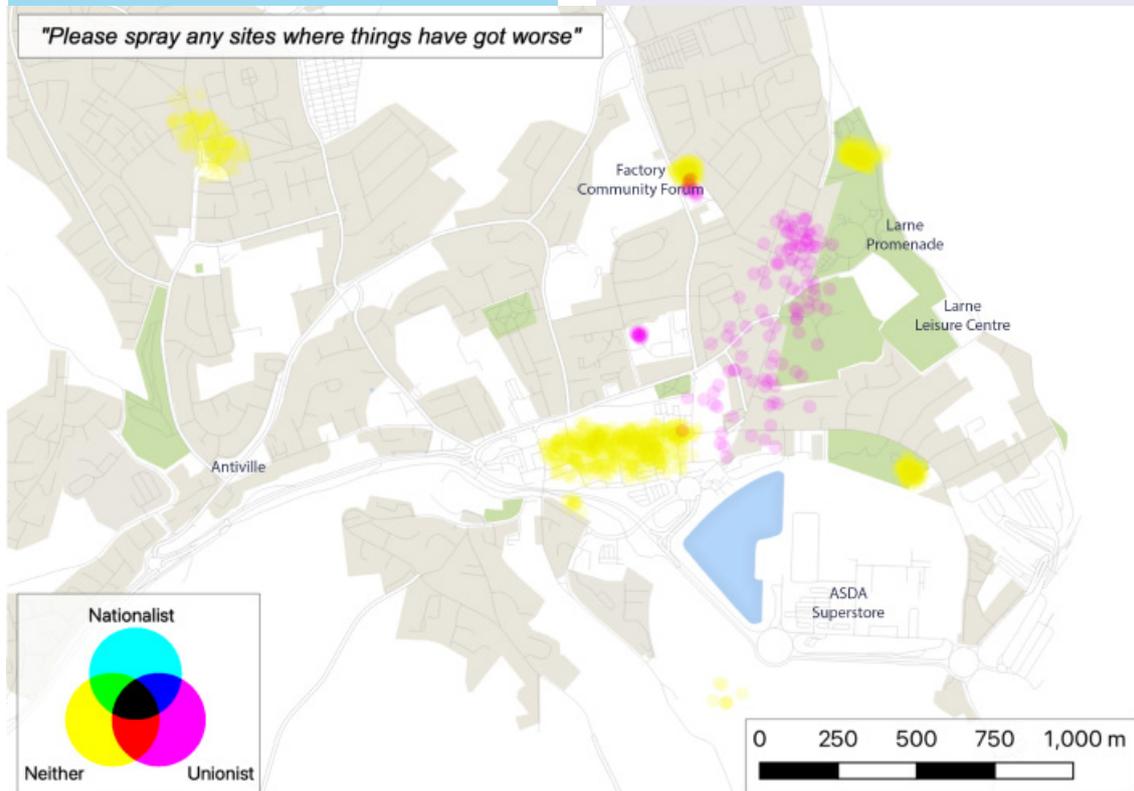


Figure 4: Locations in Larne where things have got worse.

## Qualitative Interviews

Throughout all the Qualitative Interviews, participants identified a large number of concerns about the current capacity and condition of Larne and its surrounding area.

Many participants were concerned about the scale of drug use and addiction that existed in the area.

*'Drugs... I think drugs would be the single biggest problem. The scale of it... it's getting all ages... you've kids... proper kids... 13... 14 years of age.... You've parents and grandparents. It's completely awful.'*

A number of participants felt that a basic lack of investment in the area had created a lack of necessary services, which had led to the decline in the physical environment (due to the lack of capital funding). In this regard, participants explained that they felt as there were a number of homes in the area that 'were not fit for purpose'. It was suggested that some old housing areas were 'packed together' and they needed to be 'completely rebuilt to a better standard'.

*'We get no investment whatsoever (from relevant statutory bodies), so everything is falling apart.'*

*'The standard of some housing is really awful. The Council needs to come and clear everyone out and then completely revamp some areas... they wouldn't live in it... so why should anyone (else).'*

Many participants felt that there was a lack of political leadership in the area to deal with the various types of problems stated in this section. In this instance, it was claimed that 'political parties only wanted to know about bonfire management'.

High levels of family breakdown were seen as a significant problem in the area.

Poor education outcomes had created a lack of aspiration and hope.

Moreover, a number of participants were struggling with spiralling debt problems.

*'I think you could find one family where the parents are living in different houses, where none of the kids are leaving school with any type of education and where there's probably mountains of debt scattered across each family member. I think there's a very large number of families (in this area) in that condition... or at least they're facing at least a combination of those problems. Very tough... I mean who do they go to for one of those problems... let alone all of them... so people are stuck... they can't clear their heads or catch a breath. They're not looking at one problem at a time... they're seeing all these things coming at them and it's so overwhelming... they might as well have another drink, another hit, another bet... whatever they can do to deny the reality of what they're living through... and that's every day... every single day they're living like that. It's overwhelming for people.'*

## COMMUNITY SAFETY – POINTS OF BELONGING

In this section, we identify how our participants feel about the issue of community safety in Larne, with a specific focus on locations where people feel safe.

### Household Survey

Respondents to the Survey were largely positive about the spirit of the community, regarding how it addressed incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour.

- **67% of respondents felt that local residents abided by the rule of law.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 61%
- **76% felt that improved lighting and alleygating would make them feel safer, while 55% said improved relationships with the PSNI would also help.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 60% & 59%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

**When participants were asked to mark locations in Larne where they feel safe, a large number of participants marked Larne Promenade. When asked why, they noted that it was a location that was widely used by the community. It also evoked memories of the past.**

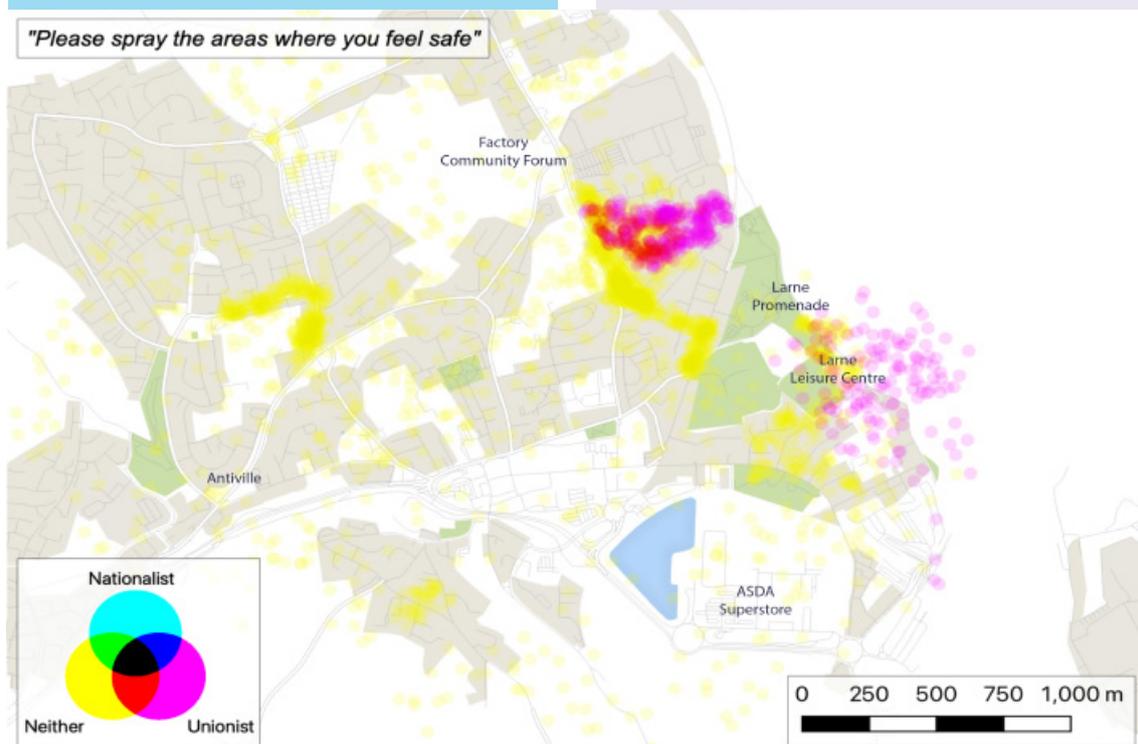


Figure 5: Locations in Larne where people feel safe.

## Qualitative Interviews

Although participants identified a number of issues that often make them feel unsafe as they move around the site, covered elsewhere in this Report, they did also suggest some aspects of the area that make them feel and/or provoke a sense of belonging.

Participants generally felt that while paramilitary groups were still active in the area, they were no longer as visible. In this instance, participants were still uncomfortable that the groups were active in any form, but they felt as though their decreasing visibility had opened up space for new community leaders/groups to develop.

*'They're still there... I mean coming up to July or whatever... that's when you'll really start to feel their presence again, but I think for the most part... the drugs they're doing and that thing... they kind of need to be in the shadows. When what they are doing is just crime, I think they need to pull away from the forefront of the community... but yeah, then around July... there will be a show of strength.'*

*'I mean they (locally based paramilitary groups) are still around, but they're not doing what they were, like they're not doing the stuff they might have done (in the past). They're definitely not pulling the community in different directions to support different political issues... so as they've been doing whatever they do now... I think new groups... new people have developed the confidence to come forward and try and lead on some of the big gaps that exist in the area. The type*

*of societal issues that paramilitary groups would never have touched. I think in the past... if someone thought I'll raise money for the school or whatever, they (locally paramilitary groups) would have been straight round... and they probably would have scared that person off.'*

*'In the past... it was all about control (for locally based paramilitary groups). No one else could speak for the area... or try and resolve a problem. I think they've lost interest in controlling the area that way... they want to control the area with drugs and money lending, but that's more slight of hand. It's less in your face. I don't know if we're safer, but you probably feel less directly threatened.'*

The perceived decline in visibility of locally based paramilitary groups has also facilitated the opportunity to reimagine parts of the visual landscape that some participants had previously found problematic. A number of paramilitary murals have been reimaged and now contain anti-drugs messages and images of people from the area who have had success in sport. One of the reimaging projects was facilitated by CIT.

*'There was a wall in the area, where they (locally based paramilitary groups) used to put people's names up who were under threat... that could have been a resident or a politician, now that's been redone and there are images of different people from the area who've went on to do different things... boxing or whatever... things kids can aspire to.'*

## COMMUNITY SAFETY – POINTS OF THREAT

In this section, we identify the feelings participants had about the issue of community safety in Larne, with a specific focus on locations that made them feel unsafe.

### Household Survey

While the respondents to the Survey indicated a number of concerns about their local area throughout their responses, there were two significant issues identified by a significant number of respondents:

- **72% felt ASB was a problem in the area.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 55%.
- **76% believed that drug related crime was also a problem in the area.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 57%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **When participants were asked to mark locations in Larne where they felt unsafe, some participants marked Larne Town Park. As discussed elsewhere in this Report, it was suggested that there is a locally held belief that it is site where incidents of anti-social behaviour and low-level crime is common – this includes under-age drinking, drug dealing, graffiti and fighting amongst young people.**

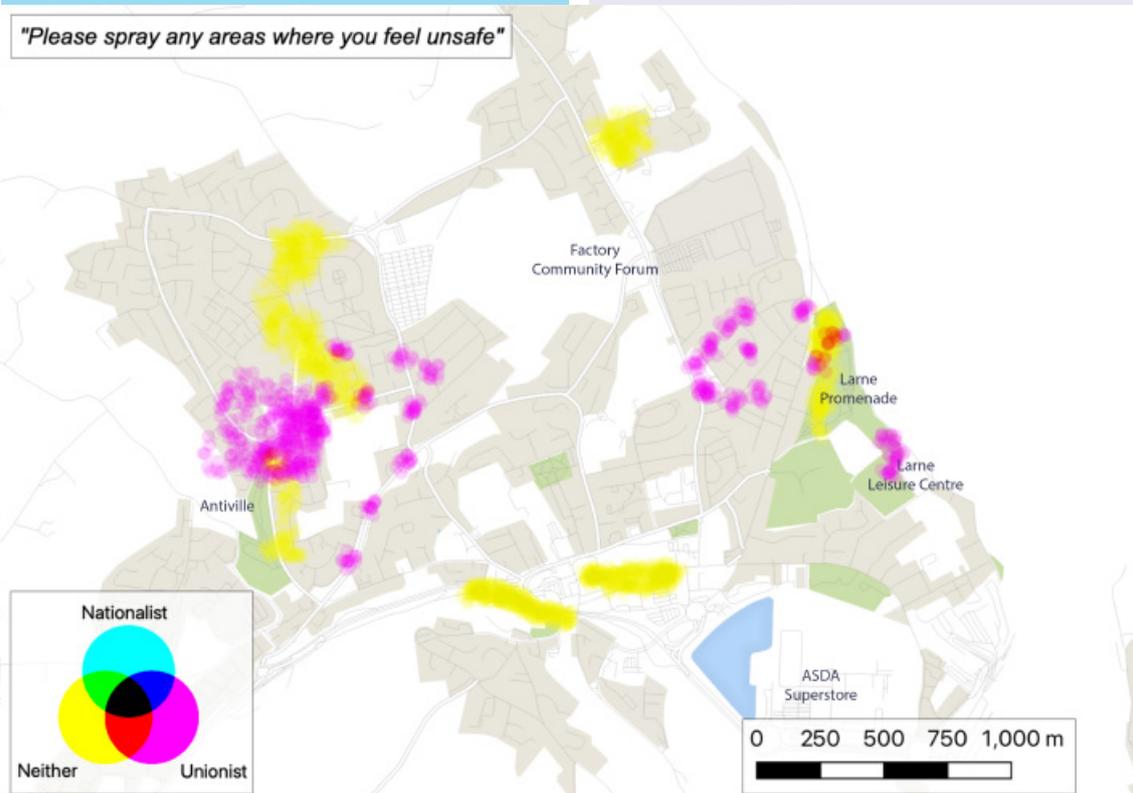


Figure 6: Locations in Larne where people feel unsafe.

## Qualitative Interviews

Although participants observed some aspects of their local area that made them feel or provided a sense of belonging in the last section, there were a number of local issues that also posed some degree of threat to their sense of safety.

Almost every participant was concerned about the current level of policing in the area. Some felt that the local force was underfunded and felt they were consequently struggling to deal with the scale of problems that exist in the area.

*'They (local police) have no real presence at all... the station only operates part-time hours and they just don't seem to have the money to really invest in having more... having more of a role in the area.'*

A number of participants suggested that there was a local lack of confidence in the police. When asked why this may be the case, it was noted that the community was frustrated by the increasing amount of drug addiction in the area and were concerned that the police had been unable to intervene more successfully to deal with the issue.

*'I just think that for people who have watched them struggle to cope with the paramilitaries and who are now watching the area being swept over with drugs... I mean, how can you have any confidence in them?'*

*'If you're a parent and you've lost a child to drugs... even if they're still alive, but the drugs has taken them... when you experience that and then see the level of the problem... I think you can*

*understand why people don't have confidence (in the police). I think that's fair enough... people want them to deal with this (the scale of drug usage and addiction in the local area), but they don't have the answers.'*

Some participants felt that although paramilitary groups were generally less visible in the area, there was more low-level disorder in the area than there had been in the past. In some instances it was suggested that paramilitaries may have previously dealt with such disorder.

*'I think there's a lot more anti-social behaviour than there used to be. You know? I mean... I would just be uneasy. If I was going to go for a pint or whatever on a Saturday night, I probably wouldn't go right into the town. Why not? Well, there's just... it's just I wouldn't feel as safe. You see a lot more scuffles or fights between young lads than you would have done in the past. There's just ones... I don't know if it's maybe drugs or whatever, but I'm 40 now... if they aren't afraid of each other... they're not going to be afraid of me... are they?'*

*'You definitely feel like people are more reckless now or something... they just don't seem to fear the police anymore. It used to be... if me and my mates seen the police, everyone ran and you didn't want them to find out who you were. Now, I think the young ones are more likely to stay and turn on them... they want to square up to them. They're not afraid of them anymore.'*

## INFLUENCE OF PARAMILITARY GROUPS AND/OR ORGANISED CRIME GANGS

In this section, we present the ways in which participants felt that paramilitary groups and/or Organised Crime Gangs have an influence in Larne.

### Household Survey

- **24% of respondents felt that young people living throughout Larne were under too much influence from paramilitary groups.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 32%
- **40% felt that paramilitary groups create fear and intimidation in the area.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 34%
- **26% felt that paramilitary groups had a controlling influence in their area.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 27%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **When participants were asked to mark locations in Larne where paramilitary groups have an influence, some indicated that they could spray the entirety of the area.**
- **A large number of participants marked a collection of streets near Larne Town Park where they felt the groups were specifically active. This included, Wellington Parade, Recreation Road and Feris Avenue.**

"Please spray the areas in your area where you feel paramilitary groups have an influence"



Figure 7: Influence of Paramilitary Groups and/or Organised Crime Gangs in Larne.

## Qualitative Interviews

Although participants have identified elsewhere in this Report that paramilitary groups have less of a visible presence than they have had in the past, it was also stressed that they remain active. It was suggested that the groups now prefer to act more covertly to draw less attention to the different criminal activities they are involved in (specifically drug dealing).

*'I think you'd need to be pretty naïve not to think that they're very active in every Loyalist area.'*

*'You don't see them running about now... not as much as they did in the past... then they were trying to make problems that they could then go about solving, but they still control the area. You see that every year around bonfire season... they come out and pay for this and that and they re-establish themselves. It suits them not to be about all the time, but make no doubt about it... they could have a couple of hundred men out on the streets tomorrow morning.'*

Despite the groups being less visible than they were in the past, participants indicated that recruitment was still ongoing. It was noted that they were most likely to target young, unemployed men who had left school without qualifications and who might be from a broken home.

Participants stated the groups were most likely to be involved in drug dealing, money lending and the extortion of local businesses.

It was noted that the two most common requirements that the members had to comply with was paying 'dues' (membership fees) and being available to attend certain events.

Participants felt that people were most likely to join the groups due to the scale of their personal and/or family debt for drugs and/or gambling.

Although participants were 'relieved' that the groups had less of a visible presence in the area than they did in the past, some were concerned that the modern version of the groups had no interest in the 'betterment' of the area (with some feeling that previous iterations of the groups did have a commitment to local residents). In this instance, participants felt that the groups were better defined as organised crime gangs, who used paramilitary titles to gain some credibility or 'community cover' for their illegal activities. Aside, from a perceived decline in their interest in the area, there were also concerns that the current version of the groups were 'less structured' and more 'reckless' than they had been in the past.

*'My son, he's 29... he has assisted living, because he's disabled... they completely destroyed his house and car, but they had the wrong person. They were looking for some fella, but because they didn't know what house was his, they just did about five of them in a row. They threw paint all over the front of the house and all over the car. He came out the next morning and it was really upsetting for him. He's moved back home and he barely leaves the house.'*

## ENDNOTE 1: Household Survey

### COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

1. 66% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that there was a strong sense of community throughout their area.
2. 68% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt connected to their local area.

### KEY FACILITIES

3. 13% indicated they were involved with a local church.
4. 14% were involved in a local sports club.
5. 9% were involved in a local school.
6. 5% were involved in a neighbourhood association.

### COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING BETTER

7. 84% indicated that that they would know who to contact if they had a problem associated with their community.
8. 50% felt that they had the skills to help change their area for the better.
9. 29% felt that their area would be in a better condition in five years time.

### COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING WORSE

10. 27% agreed or strongly agreed that they had an influence over decisions that are made about their area.
11. 71% indicated that their area would either be in the same condition or worse off, in five years time.

### COMMUNITY SAFETY – POINTS OF BELONGING

12. 61% of respondents felt that local residents in their area abided by the rule of law.
13. 60% indicated that changes to the local environment (including alley gating and/or extra street lighting) would help make people feel safer in their area.
14. 59% suggested that improved relationships with the PSNI would also help.

### COMMUNITY SAFETY – POINTS OF THREAT

15. 55% indicated that anti-social behaviour was a problem in their area.
16. 57% indicated that drug related crime was also a problem in the area.

### INFLUENCE OF PARAMILITARY GROUPS AND/OR ORGANISED CRIME GANGS

17. 32% felt that locally based paramilitary groups had too much influence on young people living throughout their area.
18. 34% indicated that paramilitary groups create fear and intimidation in their area.
19. 27% noted that paramilitary groups had a controlling influence on their area.

## ENDNOTE 2: SPRAYCAN MAPPING TOOL/PGIS SOFTWARE

The 'Spraycan' software constitutes a Participatory GIS (PGIS) interface that permits participants to answer spatial questions by drawing onto a Google map (or satellite image) using a 'spray can' (or 'airbrush') tool, as opposed to using traditional map-based drawing tools such as points and polygons.

The significance of this approach to participatory mapping relates to the way in which members of the public typically think about the world around them, and how this contrasts with the way in which we typically store these places in GIS software. People tend to think about the world in terms of places, which are typically vaguely defined, in that universally accepted and unequivocal boundaries cannot be determined for them. This is because places are defined by the individual perceptions, experiences and cognition of the participants, and so the extent of an area will necessarily vary between them.

Place-based models contrast with the space-based approaches that are used in typical GIS software, which require precision in the location and boundaries of these places. The use of such space-based representations for vague places enforces an 'artificial precision' (after Montello et al., 2003) onto them, resulting in a poor representation of the place in question – which will impact upon any subsequent interpretation and analysis. It has also been shown that people find it difficult to convert their place-based thoughts and feelings into spatial representations in this way, meaning that the imposition of

this 'artificial precision' also acts to reduce the quality of the data.

In order to avoid these negative effects, and the resulting challenges from incorporating findings into policy, we can use alternative map interfaces that are designed 'for purpose', of which the 'Spraycan' is a prominent example. In this case, participants can add data to the map without consideration of precise boundaries, as well as allowing them to change the density of the 'paint' (denoting variation in strength of feeling, for example). This approach facilitates either qualitative (e.g. Huck et al., 2019) or quantitative (e.g. Huck et al., 2014) interpretation, and has been applied to a range of environmental and socio-cultural problems worldwide, by a variety of organisations, governments and universities.

## FURTHER READING

More information about the software and its motivations can be found in the following publications:

Huck, J.J., Whyatt, J.D. Sturgeon, B., Hocking, B., Davies, G., Dixon, J., Jarman, N. and Bryan, D. (2018). Exploring Segregation and Sharing in a Divided City: a PGIS approach. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 109:1, 223-241

Huck, J.J., Whyatt, D. & Coulton, P. (2014). Spraycan: a PPGIS for capturing imprecise notions of place. *Applied Geography*. 55, p. 229-237

Evans, A. J., & Waters, T. (2007). Mapping vernacular geography: web-based GIS tools for capturing “fuzzy” or “vague” entities. *International Journal of Technology, Policy and Management*, 7(2), 134-150.

Montello, D. R., Goodchild, M. F., Gottsegen, J., & Fohl, P. (2003). Where's downtown?: Behavioral methods for determining referents of vague spatial queries. In *Spatial cognition and computation* (pp. 185-204). Psychology Press.

## REFERENCES

Co-operation Ireland. (2018). *Building Capacity to support transition in Larne* (Belfast: Co-operation Ireland).

Sturgeon, B. & Bryan, D. (2021). *Communities in Transition: Mid-term Review* (Belfast: The Executive Office NI).





# Communities in Transition

For enquiries contact:

**Dr Brendan Sturgeon**  
*Research Fellow*

**Senator George J. Mitchell Institute  
for Global Peace Security and Justice at Queen's  
University Belfast**

**School of History, Anthropology,  
Philosophy and Politics**

**Queen's University Belfast  
BT7 1NN**

**Tel: 02890 975052**

**Email: [b.sturgeon@qub.ac.uk](mailto:b.sturgeon@qub.ac.uk)**



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**QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST**



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